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AUTHOR Markowitz, Joy
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ABSTRACT

This document reports on the purpose, implementation, and outcomes of a policy forum on strategies used to address the disproportionate number of students from minority ethnic/racial groups receiving special education. Participants included representatives of state education agencies, local education agencies, the university/research community, general education, the Office for Civil Rights, and advocacy groups. The policy forum's purpose was to critique preliminary findings of a case-study investigation in three states and to identify specific strategies for addressing the disproportionate representation problem. Strategies were identified for the following six areas: (1) the importance of school staff trained to work with culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse students and recruitment of staff reflecting this diversity; (2) the need for on-going professional development opportunities for school personnel in such areas as positive classroom management, effective instructional practices, and non-biased assessment; (3) the need to inform and involve communities in addressing issues of disproportionality; (4) the need for involving parents early in the child's school career; (5) the need for closer collaboration between general and special educators; and (6) the need for special education data, disaggregated by race/ethnic group, to understand disproportionality and focus strategies. A list of forum participants and the agenda are attached. (DB)

POLICY FORUM REPORT

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION: A CRITIQUE OF STATE AND LOCAL STRATEGIES



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Convened on September 14-15, 1995
at the
Radisson Barcelo Hotel
Washington, DC

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Prepared for:
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Prepared by:
Joy Markowitz, Ed.D.
Project FORUM

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314

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Stan Boren
Principal
Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

Denice Grant
Teacher
Alexandria City Public Schools, VA

Harold Dent
Associate Director
National Center for Minority Special Education
Hampton University
Hampton, VA

Jean Peelen
Director
Elementary and Secondary Education Policy Division
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education

Gretchen Rossman
Visiting Professor
Harvard University Graduate School of Education
Boston, MA

ABSTRACT

This report is the result of a policy forum convened by Project FORUM, a contract funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U. S. Department of Education (OSEP) and located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). Project FORUM carries out a variety of activities that provide information needed for program improvement, and promote the utilization of research data and other information for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The project also provides technical assistance and information on emerging issues, and convenes small work groups to gather expert input, obtain feedback, and develop conceptual frameworks related to critical topics in special education.

This document reports on the purpose, implementation, and outcomes of a policy forum entitled *Disproportionate Representation: A Critique of State and Local Strategies* held at the Radisson Barcelo Hotel in Washington, DC on September 14th and 15th, 1995. Participants included representatives of state education agencies, local education agencies, the university/research community, general education (e.g., teacher, principal), the Office for Civil Rights, and advocacy groups. Beginning with preliminary findings from Project FORUM's case study investigation, participants generated specific strategies, in six topic areas, to address the disproportionate number of students from minority ethnic/racial groups receiving special education services.

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION: A CRITIQUE OF STATE AND LOCAL STRATEGIES

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICY FORUM

Purpose of the Activity

During the spring and summer of 1995, Project FORUM at NASDSE conducted a case-study investigation in three states of the strategies used to address the disproportionate number of students from minority ethnic/racial groups receiving special education. The investigation involved interviewing state education agency personnel, as well as personnel in three school districts within each state. Preliminary findings indicated that strategies being implemented could be grouped into six topic areas. The purpose of this policy forum was to critique those preliminary findings and identify specific strategies within each of the six topic areas.

Preparation for the Policy Forum

Selection of Participants

Project FORUM and OSEP staff worked closely to select participants who would represent different perspectives on the issue of disproportionality, and who had experience with diverse student populations. Invited participants included state directors of special education and other state education agency staff, local education agency administrators, general education personnel (principals, teacher), university-based researchers and teacher trainers, advocates, technical assistance provider, staff from professional associations, and personnel from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. The list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

Background Materials

All participants received the following background materials prior to the policy forum:

Ewing, N. (1995). Restructured teacher education for inclusiveness: A dream deferred for African American children. In B. A. Ford, F. E. Obiakor & J. M. Patton (Eds.), *Effective education of African American exceptional learners* (pp. 189-207). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Gersten, R., Brengelman, S. & Jimenez, R. (1994). Effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students: A reconceptualization. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 27(1), 1-16.

Project Forum at NASDSE. (1995). *Disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education: A comprehensive examination*. Alexandria, VA: The National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Logistical Details

The policy forum was held at the Radisson Barcelo Hotel in Washington, DC on Thursday, September 14 and Friday, September 15, 1995. Working sessions were held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday and from 9:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. on Friday.

Process of the Policy Forum

Activities

The first morning of the policy forum began with a welcome and review of forum goals by Joy Hicks, Project FORUM's director. Participants introductions followed. The next section of the morning was devoted to two speakers: Jean Peelen - Director of the Elementary and Secondary Education Policy Division, U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and Harold Dent - Associate Director of the National Center for Minority Special Education Research and Outreach at Hampton University in Virginia.

Following a short break, Joy Markowitz, Project FORUM Policy Analyst, provided an overview of Project FORUM's past activities in the area of disproportionality and a summary of the recently-conducted case study investigation of strategies used to address the disproportionate number of students from minority ethnic/racial groups receiving special education. Preliminary findings were reported by presenting six strategy topic areas. Participants were asked to review of the strategy topic areas individually before lunch.

After lunch the participants were divided into three work groups. The work groups met for two hours and each discussed two of the strategy topic areas. Their task was to critique the two areas and generate a list of specific strategies in each area which would address disproportionality. The final hour of the first day was a total group discussion on the federal, state and district roles in addressing disproportionality.

At the beginning of the second day, participants were asked to individually review and append the strategy lists the small work groups generated the previous day, paying particular attention to the four topic areas not discussed in their small group sessions. The remainder of the morning was spent refining the strategy lists with the total group. The policy forum was adjourned at 11:45 p.m. by Joy Hicks.

The complete agenda can be found in Appendix B.

Summary of Speakers' Remarks

The following summaries were prepared using audiotape recordings of the speakers' presentation.

Jean Peelen - Office for Civil Rights

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has been extremely active in the area of disproportionate representation for the past year. A year and a half ago, this issue was declared to be extremely important by our Assistant Secretary, Norma Cantu, as was any issue that has to do with access to high quality education (e.g., ability grouping, education for children whose English is limited). These issues are related to the notion that was the impetus for Goals 2000.

At first OCR's efforts were limited to the very traditional compliance reviews. However, we have changed the way we operate in OCR. We have stopped pretending that we know everything about education, because we do not. We are not educational experts. OCR is making an incredible effort to reach out and involve parents/families, community members, state agencies, desegregation centers, Title IV centers, the resource centers, OSEP--anybody who has information that could be useful.

The first discovery we made, probably two months into this effort, was, that disproportionality is not a single issue. It is really a danger signal--a signal that something could be wrong. This signal is cause to take a closer look at the problems, and they vary from district to district, from state to state, and from region to region. The problem may be inadequate interventions in general education in all schools in a school district. Or, this may be true only in schools that have a high proportion of minority students. The problem may be in the evaluation process--the use of the IQ test or its results. Or, it may be that students are rightfully receiving special education services, but are isolated in special education classrooms populated primarily by minority students. The fact is that we have an educational system that manifests problems that too often result in more harm to minority students than majority students.

This does not mean that every school district has problems and it does not mean a system with problems is being discriminatory and in violation of Title VI. These types of investigations are very difficult because we are looking at complex systems. OCR tries to understand how the system works and where problems exist.

OCR presently has about 60 enforcement actions open around the country, concentrated in a few states. When we go into a district, we try to narrow the investigation to a few areas. OCR used to do what I call "vacuum reviews"--suck up every piece of information in sight, take it home, and stare at it because it was so overwhelming. We did not always focus successfully. Sometimes we missed areas where there were problems because we focused in the wrong place. Today we work hard at focusing in on areas that show signs of problems (e.g., pre-referral, least restrictive environment).

Investigations are carried out differently in different parts of the country. But we are trying more and more to get others involved so that what we do is useful to the children first, then to the school district. OCR does not want to do just another enforcement activity. We want

something that is useful and can help the districts and states take a hard look at their special education programs and the effect of these programs on minority students.

What is OCR finding? There are problems related to interventions, particularly interventions implemented haphazardly and inconsistently across schools in the same district. When inconsistent interventions are combined with a high referral rate to special education services for minority students, this may be a violation of Title VI. Sometimes we see school districts where the pre-referral programs are good in schools with a high concentration of non-minority students and poor in schools with a high concentration of minority students. OCR would probably find these districts in violation of Title VI.

OCR is also looking closely at the area of evaluation. We are concerned that the requirements in Section 504 and the IDEA--that no single test, such as the IQ test, be used for placement--are not followed in some jurisdictions. We are starting to use sophisticated data analysis that will tell us, for example, if the IQ test was the de facto indicator, even when more than one test was used. We suspect this in one case, even though the numbers are small. However, there is some concern that such an analysis would not hold up if OCR ended up in court defending a Title VI violation.

What surprises me is how often we are seeing straight old fashioned unsophisticated discrimination. For example, in one school district there was a 70 IQ score cut-off score for the disability classification educable mentally retarded (EMR). When we looked at the students with that classification, we found 28 percent of the Black students had a score higher than 70 while only one White student had an IQ higher than 70. That's breaking their own rules! Now we are looking at some of these obvious things, whereas we had been assuming that everybody was following their own rules.

The other area in which we are finding many problems is least restrictive environment (LRE). In the past we used to think of LRE as relating to disability, not race, discrimination. As an agency, OCR interpreted the reference to LRE in the IDEA and Section 504 to mean that students with disabilities need to be with students without disabilities in order to have role models. However, if you read a little further into the regulations, at least under Section 504, there is also reference to access to the general education program. The intention, therefore, is not just to be around students without disabilities, but also to keep students in general education programs to the greatest extent possible. So when we see all day separation for EMR students, it may well violate Section 504 and IDEA. And when these EMR classes have a disproportionate number of Black students, this is a violation of Title VI.

OCR is working with states in different ways. For example, we came into New Jersey and discovered that they were very proactive--they had already identified the 50 school districts which showed the greatest degree of racial disproportion in their special education programs. In

Delaware, someone filed complaints with us about every school district in the state. We said we could do 17 or 19 compliance reviews or work with the state cooperatively to examine the issue.

In the state of Mississippi we have 4 or 5 compliance reviews underway, and have completed three of them. We're in the process of working with these school districts on developing corrective action plans (CAP). With CAPs in hand, OCR plans to go to the state to talk about patterns in the districts and what can be done in the rest of the districts. Mississippi is in an unusual circumstance because the state itself is under a federal court order to reduce the number of minority students in special education. Additionally, the state actually has a hand in the placement of every child in the state. Because of this, there is incentive for the state to work with OCR.

In Virginia we opened 14 compliance reviews and have nearly completed 5 school districts. We do not have any findings yet, but are now sitting down with the state education agency, in a partnership agreement, to discuss how it can help us so that full compliance reviews are not necessary in all 14 districts. In Louisiana, before setting foot in any school district, staff from our regional office is going into the communities to hold public meetings which involve the state agency, advocacy groups, and superintendents. We will tell everyone what OCR is looking for and what we are going to do--no secrets--and try to convince the districts to work with us on examining problem areas and developing remedies. We will also tell them that OCR will come in and do this even if they do not join in the effort.

One of the great differences in how we are operating now as opposed to how we operated in the past relates to remedies. We used to get remedies that were 10 to 15 pages long, very contractual in nature. I do not know that these remedies guaranteed that change would occur and I do not know that they guaranteed that anybody, besides the district and OCR, knew or cared that anything was happening. Now our enforcement approaches are different and broader, as well as our remedies. We are attempting to involve others, and, in some cases, we will involve parents/families. We also want to get outside parties involved. For instance, our remedies may say, "The District, with assistance of the an expert outside of the district..." OCR will have to agree to the selection of an outside expert.

I have high hopes that these new approaches will have a positive effect. I do not think that OCR can do any worse then we did in the past in terms of having long-lasting effects on children. Our interactions are now less adversarial in nature. We are seeking the educational expertise within the state, the district, and the community, as well as that of national experts. We are getting more people involved and that is how real change will occur. I do not know, it may not work, but I am very excited about the possibilities and optimistic that OCR can be a change agent in this area of making high quality education open to all students.

Harold Dent - National Center for Minority Special Education

The Center for Minority Special Education (CMSE) is an outreach project authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA). This center is one of two national outreach projects funded in response to Congressional mandate to expend one percent of IDEA discretionary funds to provide technical assistance to institutions of higher education serving minority populations. It is expected that this effort will have an ultimate positive impact on issues of over-representation of minorities in special education. The CMSE assists potential applicants for the various discretionary research and demonstration programs of IDEA. Provision of such technical assistance is especially critical to these entities since many do not have a history of research capacity and they must compete with institutions who have extensive research experience and grant writing capability. The center has been in existence since 1992 and has produced encouraging experiences and results in bringing minority education researchers into national grant competitions. CMSE is located at Hampton University, an historically Black college in Hampton, Virginia.

CMSE has subcontracts with two other institutions--the University of Texas in El Paso and Sisseton-Wahpeton Community College in Sisseton, South Dakota. The University of Texas in El Paso serves institutions of higher education with largely Hispanic student populations, and Sisseton-Wahpeton is a tribal college in South Dakota. (There are 31 tribal colleges in the United States.) In some tribal jurisdictions, 70 percent of the students in tribal schools are receiving special education services. This is unbelievable--a disaster! We think the situation in inner cities is bad, but this type of situation is hard to understand.

The mandate of CMSE is to provide outreach services to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority institutions (OMIs) to assist them in participating more fully in the discretionary grant programs authorized under IDEA. (An OMI is defined as an institution with minority enrollment of 25 percent or greater.) Much of the research that we have talked about today is produced by people who are not minorities. Our goal is to enable these institutions to increase their capacity to contribute to the professional knowledge base. Until we increase this knowledge base, we are going to continue to have explanations and definitions and conclusions that do not impact problems such as the disproportionate numbers of minority students receiving special education services. CMSE aims to increase the capacity of individuals and institutions to contribute to that knowledge base.

The Alliance 2000 Project at the University of New Mexico is our sister project. This project focuses exclusively on personnel preparation grants. Other grant activities, such as model demonstration projects, research projects, and technology are the focus areas of CMSE.

CMSE identifies an institution's needs for assistance in the area of grantsmanship. This means examining the infrastructure of the institution. The mission of small institutions, which most of our constituents are, is training, not research. The average faculty case load is four,

sometimes six, classes. With this kind of case load, a faculty member does not have time to write grants. In addition, the institution does not have the experience and resources necessary to support the grant-writing process. Therefore, one of CMSE's major activities is to reach out to individuals and provide them with the technical assistance they need to increase their capacity to compete for federal, state and local grants, and to develop an institutional system that can facilitate grantsmanship.

Our technical assistance involves providing information, brochures, and newsletters which describe available grants and how an individual can proceed in proposal development. CMSE also provides individual consultation and encourages networking within and across institutions. Successful grant writers have given us copies of their successful proposals and we share them with the people we assist. CMSE can also establish mentorships to provide an opportunity for persons interested in developing a proposal to work with an established researcher or project director.

CMSE offers proposal-writing workshops, where we bring together a small group of people at a location for three days, and work with them on developing a proposal. I want to emphasize the fact that we assist in the development of proposals from beginning to end. In preparation for our workshops, we ask people to develop a concept paper. CMSE uses successful grant writers and researchers as consultants at these workshops to review concept papers, help people focus, and give feedback on each section of the proposal as they write. Consultants are also used at other times. One of the areas we focus on in the workshops is the selection criteria reviewers use in evaluating grants. You could be the most creative person in the world, but unless you address those criteria, you will not get yourself in the door.

In addition to the proposal-writing workshops, we provide informational workshops. These are usually in conjunction with state activities, such as a CEC conference, or other national/local conferences. In these settings we provide the participants with basic information about our Center and services, IDEA, and the U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

One of the things that we have to overcome is the notion that the success rate for proposals submitted by "the biggies" is high. This is not true! A proposal may be submitted several times before it is funded. People who don't have experience writing proposals get frustrated and go back to doing what they are used to doing rather than re-submit the proposal. CMSE will work with people to help produce a successful submission, regardless of how many submissions might be necessary.

Our most successful competition area has been *Student Initiated Research*. Out of seven submissions by students who came to our workshops last year, three have been funded. CMSE provides a unique opportunity for graduate students and their advisors to work together on a

proposal for three days under the direction of our staff and/or consultants. Having this amount of time with a graduate advisor is a rare opportunity for a graduate student.

CMSE encourages people to focus on the priorities that OSEP establishes for grants and to find ways of addressing certain areas within that set of priorities. We also encourage people to communicate with OSEP regarding establishing priorities that will address the issues of importance to them.

Even though it may seem like a very attractive service that CMSE provides, we have had difficulty getting people involved. CMSE can provide funds to a university to pay someone else to teach courses. But the problem is once you release someone from one activity in a small institution there are so many other things that the institution wants him/her to do that they really don't have time to focus on grant writing.

I am glad that there are some state representatives here because one of the things we try to do is put our clients in touch with personnel from the state departments of education. When we hold conferences with HBCUs and OMI's, we invite state department representatives to come and discuss their initiatives. Typically, when state departments of education want to contract with an institution of higher education to conduct a study or provide a service or training, they don't go to HBCUs or OMI's, they go to *flag ship institutions*, as we call them. We want to bring people together so that they have alternatives to these traditional associations. Since much of the research activity involves school districts, HBCUs, minority institutions, state education agencies, and local education agencies must be in communication with each other.

Outcomes of the Policy Forum

Beginning with preliminary findings from Project FORUM's case study investigation, forum participants generated specific strategies to address the disproportionate number of students from minority ethnic/racial groups receiving special education services. The strategies are grouped into six topic areas, preceded by a succinct statement that reflects the participants' position in that area.

Strategy Topic Area #1

It is critical to recruit and retain a school staff (including administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.) that is trained to work with a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse student population and is enthusiastic about working with such a population. Special efforts should be made to recruit and retain a school staff that reflects the diversity of the student population and community.

- Use recently recruited personnel from diverse backgrounds to recruit others.

- Remove barriers to early recruitment (e.g., eliminate policies that prohibit the offering of early contracts).
- Provide advanced training or degree opportunities for paraprofessionals and parents from the community.
- Return to an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) where recruiting has been successful in the past.
- Infuse into all IHE coursework (including courses for administrators and other non-classroom personnel) material on working with a multicultural student population, cultural competence, addressing diverse learning needs, and being responsive to the needs of the community in which they work.
- Provide counseling for education majors at IHEs regarding the appropriateness of their career decision as they progress towards their teaching credential (i.e., counsel out students who don't fit).
- Bring college students into schools for internships, paid experiences, and cooperative learning programs.
- Convene state and IHE personnel to develop appropriate alternative certification routes that would increase diversity in the workforce.
- Pay tuition costs in exchange for a commitment to work in the district or state for a pre-determined length of time.
- Provide new recruits with mentors, and motivate mentors by providing credit towards teacher recertification.
- Get the community involved in recruitment and retention, especially businesses, churches, and industry.
- State clearly, during the interview process, the need for a school staff that works well with a diverse student population, and ask directly about the applicant's qualifications for and interest in such a position.
- Promote retention of staff by providing a positive school climate, professional development opportunities, and salary incentives.

Strategy Topic Area #2

On-going professional development opportunities are needed for all school personnel in the areas of positive classroom management, effective instructional practices, non-biased assessment, educational equity, and the richness of cultural/ethnic/racial diversity in order for school personnel to feel competent working with an increasingly diverse student population.

- Replace "one-shot" training sessions with long-term, on-going, systematic professional development that reflects a philosophy of addressing diverse learning needs in a positive school climate that values multiculturalism and educational equity.
- Involve school staff and parents/families in the content and program planning of professional development activities (e.g., conduct needs assessment).
- Provide joint professional development opportunities for general and special educators.
- Include parents/families and community members as participants in professional development activities.
- Provide professional development activities for policy makers and school board members in the areas of addressing diverse learning needs and educational equity.
- Offer teachers sabbaticals for professional development in areas which reflect the school district's philosophy of serving a diverse student population in the general education classroom.
- Insure linkages between schools and Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to support mutually beneficial activities in personnel development (e.g., school personnel teach all or part of a university course, hold courses in school buildings).
- Familiarize school personnel with the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of the various cultural/ethnic groups in the community, recognizing that there is diversity within groups (e.g., African American, Hispanic, Asian) and individuals may not fit general descriptions. Consider offering such an orientation in the cultural context (i.e., a community building).
- Provide professional development in self-identity, role perception, and self-confidence to expand teachers' ability to meet students needs within the general education classroom and reduce bias resulting from teachers' own misconceptions and feelings of inadequacy.
- Provide teachers and assessment personnel with information and training on emerging and alternative instructional and assessment approaches (e.g., cooperative learning, authentic assessment, dynamic assessment).

- Provide training that will enhance the parent family-teacher/school relationship, especially in the areas of communication and collaboration.
- Assure that pre-service training includes internships/practicums in ethnically and racially diverse communities.
- Identify qualified school personnel, who know the community well, to conduct professional development activities which complement those provided by nationally known experts.
- Build incentives for professional development into teacher evaluation systems.
- Bring non-classroom staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria workers) into the classroom to learn more about the students, instructional content, and effective behavior management.

Strategy Topic Area #3

Addressing disproportionality does not appear to be a "grass roots" issue in many communities. The challenge is to inform the community of the school district's efforts to address this issue, and involve community members in these and related efforts.

- Market to the community the short and long-term positive community impact of equitable and appropriate educational opportunities for all students.
- Develop broad-based parent/family + school + community partnerships in regard to educational equity issues, with accountability measures built in.
- Solicit the community's perspective on disproportionality and other educational equity issues.
- Include students with disabilities in district-wide assessment programs to make schools and districts more accountable for all students.
- Stress the interconnectedness of majority and minority community members in the education, workplace, and community arenas.
- Develop strategies for reaching all parents/families that are community specific and relevant (e.g., storefront approach, Head Start family-community model).
- Use existing parent/family structures (e.g., PTSA, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, Parent Advisory Boards, Business Education Councils, Interagency Collaboration Committees) to insure the integration of educational equity

issues; these issues should appear in their vision statements, policies, and strategic plans.

- Reflect the racial/ethnic composition of the community on advisory boards.
- Develop the willingness and capacity to share general and special education information and outcome data with the community that is relevant and community specific.
- Adopt a uniform statement on special education which reflects the philosophy that disproportionality is a problem when there are lower expectations and poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or special education is viewed as a place--that segregates certain groups of students--rather than a service.
- Provide better information to school staff, as well as community and parent/family members, on the value of laws, regulations, and respective responsibilities for ensuring an equitable education.
- Energize and maintain community support for schools, as problems are identified, by presenting and refining solutions with the community.

Strategy Topic Area #4

Parent/family involvement should be solicited and incorporated early in the child's school experience and maintained through the middle and high school years. Parent/family involvement should NOT begin when problems emerge at the "pre-referral intervention" stage.

- Implement policies/procedures and allocate resources at the school and district levels to insure parent/family involvement. For example:
 - expand the definition of parent/family involvement
 - provide flex time for school staff
 - hold parent/family meetings at shopping malls and churches
 - allocate a full time staff person to facilitate parent/family involvement
- Implement a variety of modes for communicating with parents/families. For example:
 - use multiple languages at meetings and in written communication
 - conduct home visits
 - increase phone contact
 - offer computer linkages
 - establish information hotline
- Share curriculum and grade-level expectations for all students with parents/families.

- Design parent/family-involvement strategies to reflect individual and group traditions and customs.
- Involve parents/families in the development of standards and expectations for students.
- Provide training for school staff on effective ways to communicate with and involve parents/families (e.g., talk less and listen more).
- Provide team training (involving parents/families, educators, and community representatives) on critical general and special education issues.

Strategy Topic Area #5

General and special educators must embrace all students who should be attending the school, including those with disabilities, and work together to provide a successful learning environment for all students.

- Provide training and support for school staff on collaboration and interdisciplinary team building.
- Reduce usage of the terms *general* and *special* education, that perpetuate separatism and categorization in the school.
- Deploy staff to provide needed services to students within the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible.
- Structure/re-organize the school so that an interdisciplinary team of educators is responsible for a specific group of students each year regardless of learning needs or disability.
- Schedule common planning time for members of a interdisciplinary team to facilitate collaboration about students.
- Set up interdisciplinary support teams in every school (e.g., teacher assistant teams, building-based support teams, instructional support teams) that develop effective instructional interventions and environments for students and teachers in need of support.
- Provide information about, and equal access to, all types of resources (material, equipment, expertise) for all staff to help them maximize the strengths of each student.

- Reduce the testing and "gate-keeping" roles of special education support personnel (e.g., psychologists, therapists) to allow them more time in general education classrooms supporting students and teachers.
- Structure the educational program to incorporate strategies that have been demonstrated to be successful with a diverse student population.

Strategy Topic Area #6

Special education data, disaggregated by race/ethnic group, is necessary in order to understand the extent and breadth of disproportionality and focus strategies.

- Collect quantitative data (e.g., type of service, disability category, baseline achievement, educational outcomes) on students receiving special education services at the state, local, school, and classroom level.
- Supplement and complement quantitative data with *qualitative* data (e.g., case studies, observations, and interviews).
- Facilitate the collection and use of data by investing in the burgeoning and increasingly affordable technology (i.e., computers)
- Provide state support and leadership to the districts in collecting, analyzing, understanding, and using data for solving problems related to disproportionality.
- Provide district support and leadership to each local school in collecting, understanding, and using data for improving educational outcomes for all students who should be attending that school (including those placed elsewhere for special education services).
- Develop, with broad-based state-wide participation, a standard set of "triggers" that would prompt the state education agency to request district examination of their policies and procedures for *possible* disproportionality.

APPENDIX A
Participant List

Participant List

Stan Boren
Principal
Saragota Center
8111 Northumberland Road
Springfield, VA 22153
Phone: 703/569-9820
Fax: 703/451-8418

Martha Brooks
State Director
Division for Exceptional Children
Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 1402
Dover, DE 19903-1402
Phone: 302/739-5471
Fax: 302/739-2388

Michael Crowley
Administrator, Monitoring and
Technical Assistant
Arkansas Department of Education
Special Education
Education Building, Room 105-C
#4 State Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201-1071
Phone: 501/682-4221
Fax: 501/682-4313

Eva Das
Attorney Advisor
U.S. Department of Education, Region III
Office for Civil Rights
3535 Market Street, Room 6300
Philadelphia, PA 19104-3326
Phone: 215/596-6088
Fax: 215/596-0983

Harold Dent
Associate Director
National Center for Minority Special
Education Research and Outreach
114 Phoenix Hall
Hampton University
Hampton, VA 23668
Phone: 804/727-5100
Fax: 804/727-5131

Kevin Dwyer
Chair
Government & Professional Relations
National Association of School
Psychologists
8524 Carlynn Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817
Phone: 301/657-0270
Fax: 301/657-0275

Barbara Gantwerk
State Director
Division of Special Education
New Jersey Department of Education
P.O. Box CN 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0001
Phone: 609/292-0147
Fax: 609/984-8422

Denice Grant
Teacher
William Ramsay School
5700 Sanger Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22311
Phone: 703/824-6950

Thomas Holtzman
Superintendent
Susquehanna Township School District
3550 Elmerton Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17109
Phone: 717/657-5100
Fax: 717/657-2919

Gayle Johnson
Senior Consultant
Dept of Special Education
Illinois State Board of Education
Mail Code E-216, 100 N. First Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001
Phone: 217/782-6601
Fax: 217/782-0372

Claudette Kaba
Program Analyst
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202
Phone: 202/205-9490
Fax: 202/260-7250

Freida Lacey
Equity Assurance Officer
Montgomery County Public Schools
Room 234
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 301/517-5863
Fax: 301/279-8479

Pat Lopez
Director of Special Education
Bloomfield Schools
325 N. Bergin Lane
Bloomfield, NM 87413
Phone: 505/632-4333
Fax: 505/632-4371

Sharyn Martin
Supervisory Equal Opportunity Specialist
US Department of Education, Region II
Office for Civil Rights
26 Federal Plaza, 33rd Floor, Room 33-
130,02-1010
New York, NY 10278-0082
Phone: 212/264-5183
Fax: 212/264-3803

Debra Merchant
Technical Assistant Specialist
MSRRC
Interdisciplinary Human
Development Institute
University of Kentucky
126 Mineral Industries Building
Lexington, KY 40506-0051
Phone: 606/257-4921
Fax: 606/257-4353

James Patton
Associate Director/Associate Professor
The College of William & Mary
Office of Academic Programs
P.O. Box 8795
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795
Phone: 804/221-2317
Fax: 804/221-2988

Jean Peelen
Director, Elementary and Secondary
Education Policy Division
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202
Phone: 202/205-8637
Fax: 202/260-7250

Gretchen Rossman
Visiting Professor of Education
Harvard University Graduate School of
Education
Gutman Library
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617/496-4799

James Robinson
Co-Chair
African American Parents Community
Education Consortium
12804 Broadmore Road
Silver Spring, MD 20904
Phone: 301/384-7454 or 8756
Fax: 301/384-8198

Cecil Short
Principal
Oxon Hill High School
6701 Layte Drive
Oxon Hill, MD 20745
Phone: 301/749-4300
Fax: 301/749-4599

Charlotte "Dee" Spinkston
Experimental Projects Coordinator
Federation for Children with
Special Needs
95 Berkeley Street, Suite 104
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: 617/482-2915
Fax: 617/695-2939

Cherie Takemoto
Parent Educational Advocacy
Training Center
Suite 206
10340 Democracy Lane
Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone: 703/691-7826
Fax: 703/691-8148

Deborah Wortham
Director of Efficacy
Implementation
Baltimore City Schools
3427 Janvale Road
Baltimore, MD 21244
Phone: 410/396-8810
Fax: 410/396-8898

OSEP
Jane Case Williams
Lou Danielson

OAS-OSERS
Theda Zawaiza

PROJECT FORUM
Joy Hicks
Eileen Ahearn
Joy Markowitz
Pecolia Freeman

APPENDIX B
POLICY FORUM AGENDA

Policy Forum Agenda
Disproportionate Representation: A Critique of State and Local Strategies

September 14-15, 1995

Thursday - September 14

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome & Introductions Review of forum goals
9:15 - 9:45	Office for Civil Rights - Overview of work
9:45 - 10:15	National Center for Minority Special Education Research and Outreach Hampton University - Overview of work
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 11:30	Summary of case study findings Introduction of strategy topic areas
11:30 - 12:00	Individual review of strategy topic areas
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch in hotel
1:00 - 1:10	Plan for afternoon/small group assignments
1:20 - 2:10	Small group session #1
2:20 - 3:10	Small group session #2
3:10 - 3:30	Break
3:30 - 4:30	Total group session
4:30	Adjourn for day

6:30	Optional group dinner

Friday - September 15

8.00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9.00 - 9:10	Plan for day
9.10 - 9:30	Individual review of strategies
9.30 - 10:30	Large group session - Identification of critical strategies for topic areas 1, 2 & 3
10.30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:45	Large group session - Identification of critical strategies for topic areas 4, 5 & 6
11:45	Final comments and adjournment